

## Message Text

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45

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-10 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAM-01 SCCT-01 SAB-01

OMB-01 ACDA-05 /084 W

----- 065184

P R 031014Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1612

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

USINT ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

US MISSION GENEVA 580

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 14376

GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL

LONDON FOR LAMBRAKIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PINS PLO XF

SUBJECT: INTRA-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT WIDENS AND DEEPENS IN AFTERMATH  
OF VC-10 HIJACKING AND "REJECTIONIST" COUNTER-ATTACK

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REFS: A. BEIRUT 14095; B. CAIRO 9673 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY. EVENTS OF LAST SEVERAL DAYS INDICATE THAT 'ARAFAT (WHO SCHEDULED RETURN TO AREA DEC 3 FROM YUGOSLAVIA) AND CO. INTEND PURSUE THEIR CAMPAIGN AGAINST PALESTINIAN ELEMENTS AND THEIR SUPPORTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR HIJACKING OF VC-10 TO TUNIS. WITH FEDAYEEN DIEHARDS, SPEARHEADED BY PFLP AND BACKED BY BAGHDAD, APPARENTLY PICKING UP PLO GAUNTLET, LINES OF BATTLE ARE BEING DRAWN, SIDES ARE BEING CHOSEN, AND STAGE IS BEING SET FOR CONFRONTATION WHICH COULD GO WELL BEHOND IMMEDIATE QUESTION OF HIJACKING AND INVOLVE MORE FUNDAMENTAL DISPUTES AMONG BOTH PALESTINIANS AND STATES OF THE REGION. AS PUBLIC POSITIONS HARDEN AND DIMENSIONS OF DISPUTE INCREASE, PARTIES WILL FIND IT INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO BACK AWAY FROM LOGICAL PROGRESSION OF WAR OF WORDS TOWARD MORE CONCRETE AND EXPLOSIVE FORMS OF CONTRONTATION. END SUMMARY.

1. PLO LEADERSHIP APPEARED OVER LAST WEEK TO BE MOVING, ALBEIT SOMEWHAT JERKILY, TOWARD FIRM ACTION AGAINST PALESTINAIN DIEHARDS CHALLENGING ITS AUTHORITY. IMMEDIATE PRETEXT AND TARGET, OF COURSE, ARE BREAKAWAY FATAH LEADER ABU NIDAL, FOLLOWERS OF ABU MAHMOUD AND PERPETRATORS OF VC-10 HIJACKING, BUT ISSUE RUNS MUCH DEEPER AND INVOLVES PLO DIFFERENCES WITH BAGHDAD ON ONE HAND AND FEDAYEEN "REJECTIONISTS" LED BY PFLP ON OTHER. FOLLOWING ARE MORE SIGNIFICANT PLO INITIATIVES OF RECENT DAYS:

A) SHIFIQ AL-HOUT, DIR. PLO OFFICE HERE, ANNOUNCED (AND PLO SPOKESMAN IN CAIRO REPORTEDLY CONFIRMED) NOV 27 ARREST IN LEBANON AND ELSEWHERE OF 26 PERSONS IMPLICATED IN HIJACKING. ACCORDING PRESS REPORTS, HOUT CONFIRMED THAT PLO HAD REQUESTED THAT TUNISIA TURN HIJACKERS OVER TO PLO AND DEMANDED THAT BAGHDAD SURRENDER ABU NIDAL, WHO UNDER FATAH DEATH SENTENCE, TO PLO. (FYI--ACCOUNTS OF HOUT'S REMARKS AVAILABLE TO US DO NOT RPT NOT SUBSTANTIATE BAGHDAD INA ACCOUNT (FBIS BE271908) IN WHICH HOUT ALLEGEDLY DENIED ABU NIDAL'S RESPONSIBLITY FOR HIJACKING.) HOUT EMPHASIZED THAT ALL PERSONS ARRESTED WOULD BE SUBJECT TO PUBLIC TRIAL.

B) PLO SOURCES IN BEIRUT CONTINUED TO REPORT PRESENCE OF PLO REPS IN TUNISIA TO FOLLOW UP ORG.'S REQUEST THAT HIJACKERS AND THOSE TURNED OVER TO THEM BY EGYPT BE REMANDED TO PLO  
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CUSTODY. MOST SUBSTANTIVE OF THESE REPORTS STATED THAT FIVE-MAN PLO DEL HEADED BY MAJID ABU SHARARA OF FATAH FLEW TO TUNIS NOV 28 AND THAT A SPECIAL PLO COMMITTEE WILL BE FORMED TO CONDUCT THE TRIAL OF THOSE INVOLVED.

D) PLO NOTABLES IDENTIFIED WITH 'ARAFAT AND CO. HAVE SPOKEN PUBLICLY ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS IN LAST FEW DAYS GENERALLY AVOIDING SUBJECT OF DEEPENING CONFRONTATION WITH PALESTINIAN "REJECTIONISTS" BUT EXTOLLING RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF PLO AT UNGA AND ELSE-

WHERE UNDER 'ARAFAT'S LEADERSHIP. MOST PROMINENT OF THESE OCCASIONS WAS RALLY AT UNESCO BLDG IN BEIRUT ORGANIZED ON NOV 29 TO COMMEMORATE ANNIVERSARY OF UN PARTITION RES. EVENT, WHICH FEATURED NABIL SHAATH, WAS HELD IN PRESENCE LEBANESE PM-DESIGNATE RASHID SOLH WHO GAVE APPROVAL TO PLO'S "DEFINITIVE ACQUISITION" OF THE ROLE OF "SOLE LEGITIMATE REP" OF PALESTINIAN PEOPLE.

D) WE ALSO NOTE FANCY FOOTWORK OF ABU IYAD IN CAIRO PRESS CONFERENCE NOV 27 (REFTEL B) REGARDING ROLE OF IRAQ IN HIJACKING AS WELL AS SUBSEQUENT PRESS REPORTS FROM EGYPTIAN CAPITAL. IT OUR UNDERSTANDING PLO NOW MAINTAINING ABU IYAD REFRAINED FROM ATTACKING IRAQ DIRECTLY IN RESPONSE TO BAGHDAD'S REQUEST (AND POSSIBLY IN BELIEF IRAQ WOULD SURRENDER ABU NIDAL IN RETURN) . PRESS REPORTS NOW REACHING BEIRUT REFLECT RETURN OF PLO SPOKESMEN IN CAIRO TO OFFENSIVE AGAINST IRAQ. LOCAL PAPERS NOV 30 CARRIED AP ITEM FROM CAIRO QUOTING UNIDENTIFIED PLO SOURCES AS CHARGING THAT PLO HAS "IRREFUTABLE EVIDENCE" THAT IRAQ IS BEHIND EFFORTS TO CREATE DISSENSION WITHIN PLO AND REDUCE POWER OF 'ARAFAT AND CO. IN ANY ME SETTLEMENT NEGOTIATIONS.

2. HARDLINE FEDAYEEN ELEMENTS, SUPPORTED BY IRAQI BAATH,

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INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

INR-05 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 SAM-01 SCCT-01 SAB-01 OMB-01 ACDA-05

NEAE-00 /084 W

----- 064941

P R 031014Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1613

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

USINT ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
US MISSION GENEVA 581  
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA  
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
AMEMBASSY RABAT  
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI  
AMEMBASSY TUNIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BEIRUT 14376

HAVE NOT THUS FAR FLINCHED IN FACE OF PLO CAMPAIGN. PFLP, WHOSE DISPUTE WITH 'ARAFAT AND CO. GOES MUCH DEEPER THAN HIJACKING ISSUE, HAS HEADED RECENT COUNTER-OFFENSIVE OF "REJECTIONIST" ELEMENTS. AMONG MORE NOTEWORTHY ASPECTS OF "REJECTIONIST" RIPOSTE ARE FOLLOWING:

A) "REJECTION FRONT" ORGANIZED RALLY NOV 29 AT ARAB UNIVERSITY HERE TO RIVAL THAT OF PLO LEADERSHIP (PARA 2C). FEATURED PERFORMERS, INCLUDING ABDUL MAJID RIFAI (DEPUTY CONFIDENTIAL

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FROM TRIPOLI WHO MOST VISIBLE LEBANESE PAYROLLEE OF IRAQI BAATH) AND ABU ABBAS (SPOKESMAN FOR PFLP-GENERAL COMMAND), STRONGLY ATTACKED 'ARAFAT AND CO. AND ACCUSED PLO LEADERSHIP OF "FOLLOWING IN WAKE OF EGYPTIAN SAUDI AXIS WITH THE AIM OF SOWING DISCORD IN PALESTINIAN RANKS." DURING RALLY, PFLP DISTRIBUTED ANTI-SYRIAN PAMPHLET ACCUSING DAMASCUS OF PROSECUTING CAMPAIGN OF DETENTION AND TORTURE AGAINST "NATIONALIST ELEMENTS AND PARTISANS" OF PFLP. WE HAVE RECEIVED FRAGMENTARY REPORTS OF PFLP-SPONSORED RALLY DEC.21 IN BAALBEK AT WHICH LAYLA KHALED WAS PROMINENT PARTICIPANT.

B) PFLP, IN MOST RECENT ISSUE OF ITS WEEKLY, AL-HADAF, FEATURED STRONG DENUNCIATION OF POLICY LINE FOLLOWED BY PLO LEADERSHIP AND RESTATED ITS REJECTION OF "CAPITULATIONIST" SOLUTIONS TO PALESTINE QUESTION. ELSEWHERE IN SAME ISSUE, ADHERENCE TO PFLP LINE OF PALESTINIAN ELEMENTS IN SIDON AREA CLAIMED WITH IMPLICATION THESE NEW RECRUITS WON OVER FROM SUPPORT OF 'ARAFAT AND CO.

C) PFLP HAS APPARENTLY DECIDED SET UP ITS ARMED RAIDS INSIDE ISRAELI-HELD TERRITORY. WE NOTE PFLP'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR ABORTIVE RAID IN VICINITY OF KUBBUTZ DAN NIGHT NOV 28-29, AFTER RELATIVELY LONG PERIOD OF MILITARY INACTIVITY. HABBASH AND HIS SUPPORTERS HAVE COME UNDER CRITICISM BY SOME PALESTINIAN CIRCLES FOR MERELY TALKING ABOUT FIGHTING AND PROBABLY SEES INCREASED MILITARY ACTIVITY AS NECESSARY TO REINFORCE THEIR EFFORTS TO SIPHON OFF SUPPORT FROM 'ARAFAT AND CO. AUTHORSHIP

OF NOV 30 RAID ON RIHANIYAH IS STILL NOT SETTLED AND PFLP HAS NOT STEPPED FORWARD TO CLAIM RAID, BUT BEIRUT DAILY MUHARRIR OF DEC. 2 ATTRIBUTED TO PFLP CLAIM THAT ISRAELIS AND NOT FEDAYEEN KILLED ISRAELI VILLAGER.

D) NIGHT OF NOV 27-28, PAPERS AND NEWS AGENCIES RECEIVED STATEMENT FROM "REVOLUTIONARY ORG. OF ASIFA FORCES" AND PURPORTING TO REPRESENT DISSIDENT FACTION WITHIN FATAH (ASIFA IS RUBRIC FOR FATAH'S MILITARY ARM). STATEMENT, WHICH PLO ATTRIBUTES TO IRAQI INSPIRATION, ATTACKED "ARAFAT'S LEADERSHIP AND CONDEMNED PLO ARREST ANNOUNCED BY HOUT AND OTHERS (PARA 2A), WHICH STATEMENT ALLEGED NUMBERED 80 IN LEBANON ALONE.

E) BEIRUT PRESS HAS REPORTED THAT TUNISIAN AMBASSADOR HERE HAS RECEIVED ANONYMOUS THREAT TO HIS LIFE IF HIJACKERS CURRENTLY HELD IN TUNIS ARE SURRENDERED TO PLO.

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3. COMMENT: PLO/FATAH HAVE APPARENTLY IMPLEMENTED WITH RECENT ARRESTS FIRST STAGE OF PLAN REPORTEDLY DRAWN UP SOME TIME AGO TO IMPOSE PLO CONTROL OVER DISSIDENT PALESTINIAN ELEMENTS. WE ARE INFORMED THAT MOST OF THOSE ARRESTED ARE "COFFEE-HOUSE" REVOLUTIONARIES AND THAT NO MOVE HAS YET BEEN MADE AGAINST ARMED ELEMENTS ON PLO'S LIST OF "INCORRIGIBLES". IT IS NOT CERTAIN THAT PLO ARRESTS WERE LIMITED TO PERSONS LINKED TO VC-10 HIJACKING AND AT LEAST ONE LOCAL PAPER REPORTED INFORMED PLO SOURCES AS SAYING DETENTIONS ALSO EXTENDED TO "OTHER EXTREMIST SPLINTER GROUPS OUTSIDE PLO." IF THIS IS TRUE AND IF, AS SOME CIRCLES SUGGEST, NUMBER OF DETAINEES EXCEEDS 26 PUBLICLY ACKNOWLEDGED, PFLP AND OTHER "REJECTIONIST" GROUPS UNDOUBTEDLY SEE THEMSELVES AS ULTIMATE VICTIMS OF PLO CRACKDOWN.

4. NO MATTER HOW PALESTINIAN "RENEGADES" READ THE SIGNS OF THE MOMENT, IT BECOMING CLEAR THAT THEY DISPOSED CONTENTEND OPENLY WITH 'ARAFAT AND CO. FOR LEADERSHIP. ALTHOUGH PLO LEADERSHIP APPARENTLY MOVING SLOWLY AT MOMENT (PERHAPS AWAITING RETURN OF 'ARAFAT), THEY SEEM DETERMINED TAKE ACTION AGAINST THOSE CHALLENGING THEIR NEWLY-RECOGNIZED AUTHORITY. INDEED, INCREASINGLY OPEN DEFIANCE OF "REJECTIONISTS" AND PARTICULARLY PFLP SEEMS TO BE CONFRONTING PLO WITH CHALLENGE IT CANNOT REFUSE.

5. WE ARE RELIABLY INFORMED THAT PFLP HAD INTENDED OPERATION NEAR DAN TO BE "SPECTACULAR" WHICH WAS TO BE HIGHLIGHT OF PRESS CONFERENCE BUT THAT, WHEN OPERATION FAILED, HAD TO CONTENT ITSELF WITH NOV 29 RALLY. NEVERTHELESS, "REJECTIONISTS" AND "LOYALISTS" NOW APPEAR BUSY SQUARING OFF AND PICKING UP SIDES AND LIKELIHOOD GROWS THAT CONFLICT WILL ASSUME CHARACTER OF SOME SORT OF ARMED CONFRONTATION. ALTHOUGH LEBANON WOULD

UNQUESTIONABLY BE THE MAIN THEATRE OF OPERATIONS (AND WE HAVE NO  
DOUBT GOL VIEWING PRELIMINARY SPARRING WITH SOME ALARM),  
THERE GOOD CHANCE STATES BACKING OPPOSING TENDENCIES AMONG  
PALESTINIANS MAY BE DRAWN, WILLINGLY OR NOT, INTO FRAY. PFLP,  
FOR EXAMBLE, HAS ALREADY INTRODUCED CONFLICT BETWEEN  
IRAQI AND SYRIAN BAATHS INTO MIXTURE. THUS, ALTHOUGH PALESTIAN FACTIONS

HAVE HERETOFORE SHOWNA REMARKABLE ABILITY TO AVOID FINAL SHOWDOWN,  
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THEY AND THEIR SUPPORTERS INCREASINGLY STANDING EYEBALL-TO-  
EYEBALL AND, SO FAR, NO ONE IS BLINKING.  
HOUGHTON

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## Message Attributes

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**TAGS:** PFOR, PINS, XF, PLO  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
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